

**COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS BY STANLEY BERGMAN  
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Thank you for that kind introduction, President Rabinowitz, and for this extraordinary honor. Thank you as well to the distinguished faculty and administration of Hofstra University for the privilege of joining you at this very important event. And to today's graduates of the Schools of Business, Communications and Engineering & Applied Science, and especially your families, please accept my sincere and enthusiastic congratulations. This is a wonderful accomplishment and the start of what is certain to be a long and successful career built on a solid foundation from this wonderful institution.

Thank you for this extraordinarily humbling honor, which I accept on behalf of my 21,000 exceptional Team Schein colleagues. My wife, Marion, and I also owe huge gratitude to the citizens of Long Island, who welcomed us into this community exactly 40 years ago. Thank you!

Here at Hofstra, you have undoubtedly learned many valuable lessons. Today, I am not going to talk about business models, accounting or what it takes to be a CEO. Instead, I would like to share 10 of the invaluable life lessons that I've learned along the way.

Being back at a university graduation reminds me of the story of the philosophy professor who gave a final exam to his class. The only question on the test was, "Why?" Everyone in the class began to write feverishly, except for one student who wrote something quickly, handed in his paper in

under two minutes, and left. The professor angrily opened the test booklet, ready to fail the student, and read two words – “Why not?” And the professor immediately gave the student an A.

The first lesson I want to share is to continually ask “Why not?” It means continually embracing change. It means remembering what Robert Kennedy said: “Some men (and women) see things as they are and say ‘Why?’ I dream things that never were and say ‘Why not?’” I have come to realize that “Why not?” is one of the most important questions to continually ask ourselves throughout our lives. And by continuing to ask “Why not?” we can ensure that we will not ask ourselves a much more difficult question later on in our lives – “Why did I not seize that opportunity when I had the chance?”

Lesson two is show up. When I was six years old, one of my father’s friends who imported the early portable transistor radios let me carry one of his radios around to my father’s bowling games. At the game, another bowler asked me where he could buy a radio like that. My father’s friend told me I could sell the portable radio and would be paid a commission. At that age, I did not know what it meant to be paid a commission, but I connected the buyer to the seller and received a check. I must say that at the age of 6, I did not know what a check was, but I learned fast. This set me down a life-long entrepreneurial road and taught me a simple but critical lesson: showing up is important. I could easily sell the radio, but I had to show up – I had to be there showing the radio. We need to play to win. Playing does not guarantee success. But playing is required to be successful.

Lesson three is think global. When I was 12, the German honorary consul in my home of Port Elizabeth, South Africa, Mr. Bülbring, learned of my interest in stamp collecting. I accompanied him to meetings of the Port Elizabeth Philatelic Society, and then began to write to postmasters around the world to buy new issue stamps for resale. That was where I gained a lifelong interest in international business and realized that even a simple transaction can give life to global commerce. I encourage you to think global. It's not that difficult but critical for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Global commerce is everywhere and can help set you apart.

Lesson four is that it is essential to engage everyone. In my parents' small department store, Eric Stores, in the South End neighborhood of Port Elizabeth, I learned one of my life's most important lessons: It's all about people. By the late 1960s, South End was still one of the few remaining racially integrated communities in apartheid South Africa, with people who came from all over the world and settled in South End. Then apartheid destroyed the vibrant harmony of our South End community. Neighbors were forced apart, and my parents, friends, and hundreds of small business owners had to relocate to segregated but culturally sterile neighborhoods. Of the many lessons I learned at Eric Stores, one stands out – the richness of diversity. One's life is made richer by spending time with people of different backgrounds. When I was 16, I helped organize summer camps for a youth movement in Port Elizabeth. The key to running a successful camp is to engage everyone and make everyone feel welcome and appreciated. As CEO of Henry Schein, I strive to apply the lessons I learned at my parents' store and as a camp counselor. The best leaders

are those who can be great summer camp counselors engaging all of the campers, no matter what their background.

The fifth lesson is to treat everyone with respect and as you would like to be treated. Our world has been transformed through a series of Industrial Revolutions. The 1<sup>st</sup> Industrial Revolution in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was about mechanized power, the industrial strength of the emerging cities in the U.K. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Industrial Revolution in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries was about mass production and communication, such as the Ford production line. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Industrial Revolution during the last 25 years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century has been about the PC and the cell phone. Now we have entered what some have called the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution, which is all about interoperability, which began when Steve Jobs held up the iPhone in 2007, and which is accelerating changes in all facets of our world. Just keeping pace with this change is stressful. Millions of people around the world are alienated by the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution. And with the added stress of political differences, it may seem very difficult to be civil with those who do not agree with us. The golden rule is essential in our rapidly changing and challenging world. It is to treat everyone with respect and to “do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

The next lesson is to appreciate the importance of family and friends. When I was young, I contracted jaundice and whooping cough. I was frail and kept out of school for a year. And as a young boy with bad asthma, I was sent to a rural area in South Africa. I spent a great deal of time with the farm workers, who lived in abject poverty in a repressive, apartheid South Africa. But they were bound tightly together by family values and trusted friendship among co-

workers. Spending so much time with these remarkable people who lived a life of virtual serfdom reinforced the importance of family and trusted friends to succeed, even in incredibly difficult circumstances.

On that rural South African farm, I also learned a seventh lesson: the importance of being persuasive and persevering. My goal was to convince the farm workers that a nine-year-old boy should be allowed to gallop on horses and drive a tractor. These childhood desires forced me to learn a lot about persuasion and perseverance. Ultimately, I “made the sale” and got to ride the horses fast and drive the tractor, but of course, my parents never found out.

Lesson eight is that we all need mentors, and we all need to be a mentor to others. Organizations do not need “bosses.” Organizations need leaders who will be coaches, facilitators and mentors – leaders who will support their people and their ideas. I encourage you to seek out mentors and to be a mentor. A key mentor of mine was Professor Edward B. Shils, who pioneered the field of entrepreneurial studies at the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School of Business, and who was the first academic to write about “intrapreneurship,” which is entrepreneurship within a large organization. Another mentor was the late Jay Schein, who invited me to be a part of his family’s business at a young age. He gave young people a chance. And, of course, my colleagues at Henry Schein are my daily mentors, who continue to inspire me every day with their fresh ideas, and continually prove that “team work makes a dream work.” Our conservative CFO, who has never seen a deal that he likes, and our exuberant Chief Strategic Officer, who has never seen a deal he does not

like. Together they provide a clear view of the left and the right. And our company's President, who helps focus priorities by reminding us that "we can do anything, but we can't do everything." Our Chief Administrative Officer, who heads up human resources and drives our company's value-based culture of caring about others. And the millennials, who are bringing an entirely new set of expectations and enthusiasm to the workforce. Look for mentors and be a mentor!

Lesson nine is give back. The more you give, the more you get back. As business leaders, we have a moral obligation to act in the service of society. At the same time, it makes business sense because businesses cannot succeed in failed societies. We are privileged to live in the greatest country on earth, and we should not take for granted the big American idea that "no dream is too big for Americans." As business and indeed all citizens, we have an obligation to be engaged. The tapestry of our great country is immeasurably enriched by our tolerance and diversity. With this in mind, I joined with my fellow CEO Farooq Kathwari of Ethan Allen to co-chair the Muslim-Jewish Advisory Council, the mission of which is to combat hate crimes against people of faith. Giving back makes good business sense, as Benjamin Franklin's idea of enlightened self-interest illustrates. Find ways to partner with others, in the public and private sectors, in the service of society. Because doing well by doing good really works!

Which leads me to the final lesson: think big. My cumulative life experiences have taught me that one must "think big" and never accept no as an answer. "Thinking small" will keep you safe, but stationary. However, if you "think big,"

you stand a good chance of reaching your goal. I have been motivated for decades by the words of the poet Robert Frost: “Two roads diverged in a wood, and I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference.” Life owes us nothing, and we should expect to encounter many roadblocks, but don’t be discouraged. Overcoming fear, obstacles and rejection makes us stronger, and is critical to our being successful in life. We should recognize the truth of what the late South African President Nelson Mandela said: “Courage is not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it.” Be courageous and think big.

So in conclusion, thank you for inviting me to share these thoughts with you today, thank you again for this tremendous honor, and congratulations on this wonderful achievement in your lives. As you sit here today and think about the “Why not?” opportunities and challenges you are presented with, it may seem overwhelming, even impossible. But remember what President Mandela said, “It always seems impossible until it’s done.” Your future is very bright, and your best years are yet to come. Thank you, and once again congratulations on this wonderful achievement in your lives.